DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 402 793 FL 024 358

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TITLE The Transfer of Perspective in the Indirect Passive.
PUB DATE Mar 96
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Conference on Pragmatics and Language Learning (10th, Urbana, IL, March 22-23, 1996).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; Contrastive Linguistics; Cultural Context; English; *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; *Japanese; *Language Patterns; *Linguistic Theory; Second Language Learning; *Tenses (Grammar); *Transfer of Training; Verbs
IDENTIFIERS *Passives

ABSTRACT

A study investigated how Japanese learners of English conceptualize the meanings of Japanese sentences in the indirect passive voice, a structure unique to Japanese, and how they express their interpretations in English. Subjects were university freshmen in two cohorts (81 in 1991, 35 in 1994). They read a dialogue in English, then completed a statement in it by translating a Japanese sentence, given orally. This was repeated 12 times with different dialogues. The sentences composed by the subjects were classified by structural type. In one dialogue, the largest proportion were causative (e.g., "I had my wallet stolen"); the second largest proportion were direct, ungrammatical, translations of the indirect passive construction ("I was stolen my wallet"). It appeared difficult for Japanese subjects to produce an unknown subject "someone" as an agent, since it is not implied in the Japanese sentence and it isn't necessary to form an indirect passive in this context. However, in other dialogues this type of transfer was not always made. It is concluded that Japanese grammar distinguishes clearly between situations in which the speaker expresses his own state and those in which he explains others' such states. (MSE)

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The transfer of perspective in the indirect passive

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0. Introduction

Your friend comes over to your house. She notices that the clock in the living room she has seen before isn't there. So she asks you where the clock is. Which sentence is used if you are the person who actually broke the clock?

1) ***Kowashi-mashi-ta.***

(I)* broke (it = the clock).

2) ***Koware-mashi-ta.***

(It = the clock) was broken.

*The meanings of the words in parentheses are implicitly conveyed.

The answer can be both 1) and 2). One of these structures is chosen depending on the speaker's perspective toward the incident. In Japanese, the subjectivity is reflected in the linguistic forms. That is, sentence 1) can be used if the speaker feels sorry or feels responsibility for the accident or some familiarity with the clock. Sentence 2) can also be chosen when the speaker feels it is troublesome or doesn't want to be bothered about the accident . Thus the choice is not necessarily made by a matter of whether the speaker actually was involved in the accident, in this case, has broken the clock or not. From the point of view of English, the Japanese language looks as if there is incongruency between the fact and the way of expressing

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the incident.

This exemplifies one contrastive aspect of structural differences between Japanese and English, Kuno and Koburagi(1977) point out that Japanese is characterized as a speaker-centered language. Incidents that have taken place around the speaker are described as actions toward or away from him/her, and /or as actions that have affected him/her favorably or adversely.

Ikegami(1981) defines Japanese as a "become"-language in contrast to English as a "do"-language. He explains that Japanese is a language in which an agent is often covert in the surface structure, thus leaving an event standing alone, whereas English maintains the agent-action sequence in a sentence.

3) ***kodomo ga futari ari-masu.***
children two there are

4) **I have two children.**

Sentences 3) and 4) have an identical meaning. However, in Japanese, "*arimasu*" is an intransitive verb meaning "to exist" and basically takes an inanimate subject. If it is directly translated into English, the sentence 3) sounds as if the implicit "I"(=the speaker) saw the children from a short distance. The English counterpart 4), on the other hand, makes sense with the meaning that "I"(=the speaker) possesses or raises the children. Hinds(1987) also clarifies this difference by characterizing Japanese as a situation-focus language and English as a possession-focus language.

On the contrary, linguistic forms in English are less equivalent to the meanings when the structural features of the two languages mentioned

above hold in a different context.

5) ***kono heya ni ha ookina mado ga ari-masu.***
this room a big window there is
6) **This room have a big window.**

The English sentence 6) has an inanimate subject "this room" possessing "a big window". The Japanese counterpart 6), on the other hand, uses an existential verb "*aru*" and is directly translated into "there is a big window in this room," which is a more faithful description of the scene than the English sentence 6).

Hinds(1987) points out that English speakers are concerned mostly about "people", while Japanese speakers are concerned mostly about "situations". His idea reveals two contrastive structures shown in the sentences 7) and 8), where an English transitive construction corresponds to a Japanese intransitive construction. Sentence 7) takes an inanimate subject "nani (= something)" followed by an intransitive verb "ochiru(= drop)" while the English counterpart is constructed with an agentive subject "you" and a transitive verb "drop". In Japanese the incident is simply stated without mentioning the agent, a person who dropped "something", although a sentence final "yo" is a mark to draw the attention of the person whom the speaker is talking to.

7) ***Nanika ochimashita-yo.***
something dropped
8) **You dropped something.**

Thus Ikegami's and Hinds' notions both conclude that the Japanese language prefers a less agentive structure compared with English and the way an appropriate sentence style is chosen is not only affected by thematization but also by the speaker's perspective or feeling toward the incident.

A series of experimental studies (Suzuki et al. 1992; Suzuki, 1994a; Suzuki, 1994b; Suzuki, 1995; Suzuki, 1996) have investigated structural differences between English and Japanese. Structures or linguistic forms of the two languages mentioned here are not captured from a grammatical point of view , but from the speaker's perspective, that is, from the speaker's way of seeing incidents or from his/her attitude toward them. The experiments were conducted for analyses of the interlanguages appearing in the English protocols of the Japanese learners of English. Their structural preference reflected a transfer of their point of views or perspective.

This study, then, focuses on the indirect passive, which is a structure unique to the Japanese language. The purpose of this study is to show evidence of a conceptual transfer, in terms of how the Japanese learners of English conceptualize the meanings of the Japanese target sentences in indirect passive and how they express their interpretations in English.

1. The indirect passive in Japanese

Voice tells whether the subject of the sentence is the agent who acts on or is the patient who receives the action. The patient becomes a subject in the English passive voice so that a transitive verb and an object are necessary to form a passive. Japanese has this type of passive construction in that it has an active counterpart with the same prepositional content.

In sentence 9) ***Picasso ga nusumareta***, we can see that the subject of this sentence is "Picasso" and the passive marker "-era" modifies the verb "steal" as illustrated in 10). It sounds like the accident (or the theft) is objectively described. This structure is equivalent to the English passive, 11).

9) ***Picasso ga nusum -areta.***
the Picasso steal PASSIVE + PAST

10) [Picasso ga nusum -areta]
the Picasso steal
S V PASSIVE + PAST

11) **The Picasso was stolen.**

Japanese has another type of passive. It is known as ***the indirect passive*** . The indirect passive is distinguished from the direct passive in the semantic aspect, although both types are the same in appearance -- i.e. using the "reru, rareru" ending.

Sentence 12) displays the surface structure of the indirect passive sentence, "Saifu wo nusuma-reta." The passive connector "-are" and the past tense suffix "-ta" are added to the stem of the main verb "nusumu (steal)".

12) ***saifu o nusum - are - ta.***
wallet steal passive + past

13) [(watashi wa) [saifu o nusumu] reta]
I wallet steal
S S V PASSIVE + PAST

14) **Someone took my wallet.**

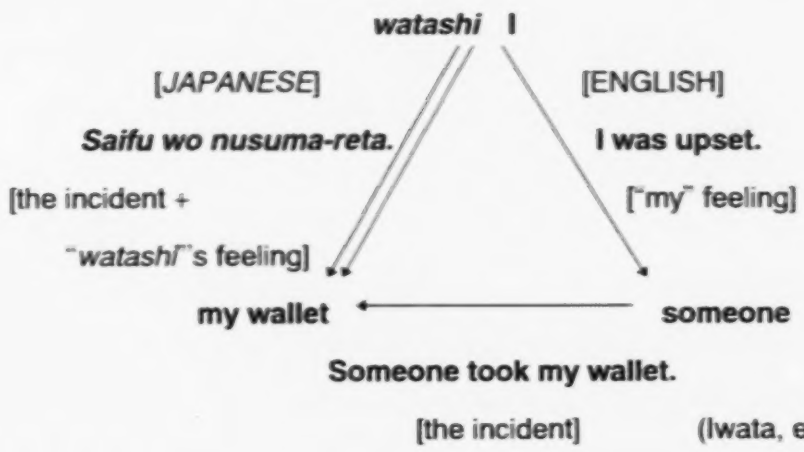
15) **I had my wallet stolen.**

The indirect passive indicates that the subject of the passive sentence is affected by the incident, and most of the time, **suffers** from it. For this reason, it is often referred to as the adversative or "suffering" passive.

Sentence 12) ***saifu wo nusumareta*** has the implicit subject "I". When we look at the semantic structure 13), the passive marker "-era" + the past marker "-ta" modify the action "to steal my wallet". Thus Japanese native speakers recognize the fact and the person who suffers from the accident, but they can't easily discover the agent of the verb, or sometimes they never know the agent because it is completely covert.

English also has an expression of the speaker/subject's feeling of suffering about the accident, called "Passive of Experience". This type of sentence is formed with a causative verb, "have", shown in 15) (Mizutani, 1985).

Figure 1



(Iwata, et al., 1990)

The concept of the suffering passive is illustrated in Figure 1, compared with the English sentences with identical meanings. In English, an agent is often placed as a subject, even though the speaker doesn't know who it is. Sentence 13) takes "someone" as a subject. This agent-action sequence sounds like an objective description of the fact. If the speaker wants to express his/her feeling about the accident, he/she will modulate his/her tone or add another sentence, for instance, "I was upset." On the other hand, in Japanese 12) ***saifu wo nusumareta*** expresses both the fact and the speaker's feeling but the agent of "nusumu (=steal)" isn't implied.

It is predicted that Japanese learners of English would have difficulty coming up with the idea that "someone" could be used as the agent as well as the subject to form the agent-action sequence to make sentence 14), "someone took my wallet."

The indirect passive expresses the subject's suffering feeling toward the incident. In this sense, it can be formed with an intransitive verb. Sentence16) ***ame ni furareta*** implies the subject "I"'s feeling that he/she got caught in an unexpected rain and got wet or cold. Sentence 17) illustrates the semantic structure, where a passive marker "reta" modifies the incident "it rained." The English counterpart 18) has a meaning similar to the Japanese sentence 16) with the phrase "on me" added, but an intransitive verb "rain" cannot form a passive.

16) ***ame ni fur - areta.***

rain(n.) drop PASSIVE + PAST

17) [(watashi wa) [ame ga furu] reta]

I rain drop

S S V PASSIVE + PAST

18) **It rained (upon me).**

2. Experiment

Method

Data were collected from the controlled composition tests given to Japanese university students in 1991 and 1994. The second test session in 1994 was conducted in order to confirm the reanalyses(Suzuki, 1994a) of the test results in 1991(Iwata et al., 1992). Although the tests were constructed for the purpose of investigating several types of interlanguage, the dialogues relevant to the transfer of the indirect passive were picked up for an analyses in this study.

The subjects were 81 freshmen in 1991 and 35 freshmen in 1994. In this study the subjects are called the students in order to distinguish them from a "subject" as a grammatical term. The students were instructed to read a dialogue first and then to fill in the blank with the help of the Japanese phrase which was orally given. The following dialogue is an example.

18) *At the station;*

Toru : Gee. Where is my wallet? I can't find it anywhere.

Tom : Did you check your pocket? You always keep it in your pocket.

Toru : I thought I had it in my pocket, but I don't...

Oh, my god! ( )

The Japanese sentence orally given for the blank →

★ *Densha no naka de saifu wo nusumaretayo.*

The target form →

☆ Someone took my wallet in the train.

Then they read through the dialogues again to check whether their own sentences sounded natural in the given situations. During the rereading, the Japanese was not repeated to avoid too much influence of the Japanese on the student's composing process.

Data analyses

The sentences which the students composed were classified according to structural types. Errors such as tense or lexicon were not strictly considered for the classification so that the analyses would focus on the students' structural preference more clearly. The target form, the sentence which corresponded best to the meaning in the Japanese cue sentence in the given context, was defined for each question with the help of a native speaker's judgment. The target form in all the dialogues relevant to the indirect passive was an active construction with an agentive subject.

Table 1 shows the structural patterns of the sentences that the subjects composed for dialogue 18). "Agent" here stands for a sentence structure which forms an active voice with an agentive subject. "Causative" structure uses the causative verb "have" with a subject "I" (= the speaker) or a person the speaker identifies with him/herself. "P-passive" is the English passive where the patient is the subject. "I-passive" is a sentence with a passive form where the subject is either "I" (= the speaker) or a person the speaker identifies with him/herself. This ungrammatical structure is often seen in English protocols of Japanese learners, since they try to express the speaker's involvement with the incident or his/her suffering feeling in the concept of the Japanese indirect passive.

Table 1

Structural patterns the subjects used in dialogue 18)

types	simple sentences	percentage of the subjects who chose the type
Agent	Someone stole my wallet.	9.8%
Causative	I had my wallet stolen.	40.8%
P-passive	My wallet was stolen.	17.3%
I-passive	I was stolen my wallet.	22.2%
Others		9.9%

Results and discussion

Table 2 shows the percentage of the students who chose each type of structure.

From the Japanese cue in situation A, "*Ha wo nukareta.*", the dentist as an agent pulling out the speaker's tooth rarely comes to mind, but the speakers painful feeling is emphasized; the feeling that your tooth was forced to be pulled out against the person's will. However, the dentist or its pronoun is a necessary word to form an agent-action sequence in English. The results shows the strong tendency of using either causative or passive voice, with the subject "I" who suffers from the pain. 18.5% of the subjects used "the dentist" as a subject. This figure was much higher than expected since the Japanese cue sentence with little implication of the dentist makes it difficult to be conscious of his existence, although common sense tells us of it.

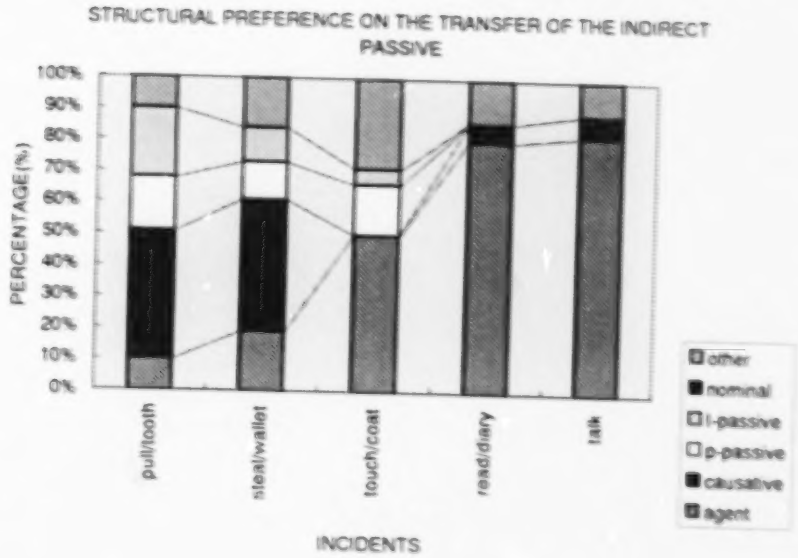
In dialogue 18), 22.2% of the students used an ungrammatical form, "I was stolen my wallet." It demonstrates that they made a structural transfer of the indirect passive, by which they paid attention to the suffering "I" in spite

Table 2

situation	sturcture	percentage
A. The speaker tells his friend that the dentist has pulled the speaker's tooth.	Agent	18.5%
☆ He pulled out my tooth.	Causative	42.0%
	P-passive	12.4%
	I-passive	11.1%
	Others	16.1%
B. The speaker complains about her sister who has read the speaker's secret diary.	Agent	80.3%
☆ She read my diary.	Causative	6.2%
	P-passive	0.0%
	I-passive	0.0%
	Others	13.5%
C. The speaker is uptset about his friend talking on the phone for three hours.	Agent	82.3%
☆ He talke for three hours.	Causative	7.4%
	P-passive	0.0%
	I-passive	0.0%
	Others	9.4%
D. The speaker complains that her younger brother has touched her favorite white coat with his dirty hands.	Agent	49.4%
☆ He touched it with his dirty hands.	Causative	0.0%
	P-passive	16.1%
	I-passive	4.9%
	Others	29.6%

☆ – target forms

Figure 2



of the fact that it is implicit in the Japanese cue sentence. Thus a causative form with an "I"-subject was also chosen by a high percentage of the students, 40.8%. Only 9.8% of the students constructed an agent-sequence form with "someone" as a subject. It seemed difficult for the Japanese native speakers to come up with an unknown subject, "someone" as an agent , since an agent isn't implied at all in the Japanese cue sentence and it isn't necessary to form an indirect passive in this context. These results reflect the way the concept or the semantic structure of the indirect passive works.

However, this type of transfer is not always made with the concept of the indirect passive. In situation B and C, a high percentage of the students produced sentences like the target forms. Inconsistent results in different situations indicate that the students did not simply make a structural transfer of the indirect passive. It seemed that they were affected by the interpretation of a psychological distance between "I" and the incident "I" was involved in. That is, the farther the distance is, the smaller the influence that "I" gets from the incident. The students, then, tended to focus less on the subject "I" and to pay more attention on the agent. It is intuitively perceived that "a pulled tooth" seems most harmful to the suffering subject "I," then "a stolen wallet," followed by "a coat getting dirty" and "a revealed diary." "A long talk" seems the least harmful among the five incidents. It is determined that the psychological distance of "I" from "a pulled tooth" is the shortest and from "a long talk" the longest here. Figure 2 is a diagram to compare the percentages of the structures chosen in the 1991 test. It clearly shows that the students tended to put "I" as a subject with a causative or I-passive form for the incidents psychologically a short distance from "I" and to put an agentive subject with an active voice for the ones seemingly more distance.

Table 3

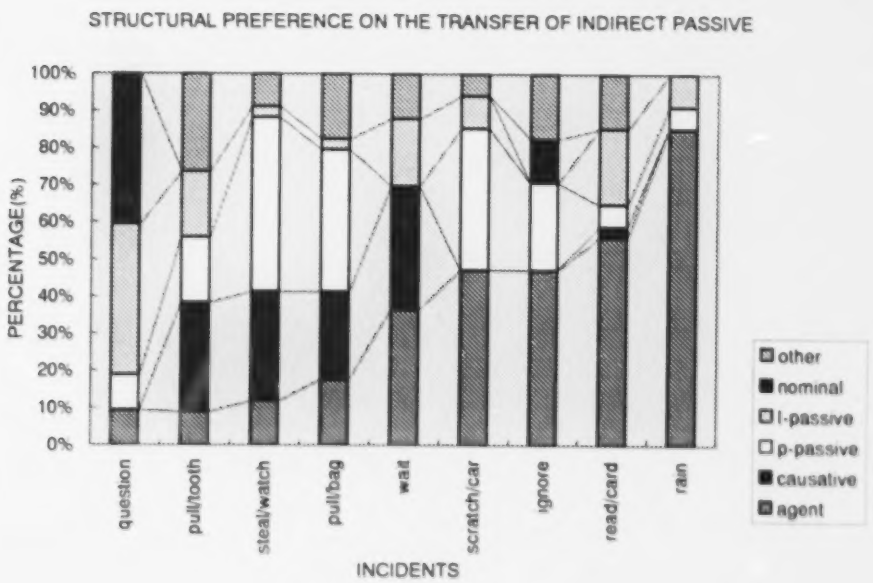
situation	sturcture	percentage
E. The speaker tells her mother that she has got nervous since the interviewers have asked so many questions.	Agent	8.6%
	Causative	0.0%
	P-passive	8.6%
☆ They asked so many questiones.	I-passive	40.0%
	Nominative	37.1%
	Others	5.7%
F. The speaker tells his friend that the dentist has pulled the speaker's tooth.	Agent	8.6%
	Causative	28.6%
☆ He pulled out my tooth.	P-passive	17.1%
	I-passive	17.1%
	Others	28.6%
G. The speaker is uptset about his watch stolen.	Agent	11.4%
☆ Someone took it.	Causative	28.6%
	P-passive	45.7%
	I-passive	2.9%
	Others	11.4%
H. The speaker talks about a packe train where somebody pulled her bag by mistake.	Agent	17.1.%
	Causative	22.8%
☆ Somebody pulled my bag.	P-passive	37.1%
	I-passive	2.9%
	Others	20.1%
I. The speaker complains about his girlfriend who kept him waiting for her for an hour.	Agent	34.3%
	Causative	31.4%
☆ I was waiting for her for an hour.	P-passive	0.0%
	I-passive	17.1%
	Others	17.2%
J. The speaker is furious about his younger brother who made some scratches on his brand new car.	Agent	45.7%
	Causative	8.6%
☆ He made some scratches here.	P-passive	37.1%
	I-passive	0.0%
	Others	8.6%
K. The speaker is disappointed because he wanted to renew the acquintance with Mari but she ignored him at the party.	Agent	45.7%
	Causative	0.0%
	P-passive	22.9%
☆ She ignored him.	I-passive	0.0%
	Nominal	11.4%
	Others	17.1%
L. The speaker complains that her sister read a postcard from her boyfriend.	Agent	54.3%
	Causative	2.9%
☆ She read it.	P-passive	5.7%
	I-passive	20.0%
	Others	17.1%
M. The speaker caught a cold since she walked for half an hour in the rain without putting up an umbrella.	Agent	82.9%
	Causative	0.0%
	P-passive	2.9%
☆ It started to rain.	I-passive	8.6%
	Others	5.6%

☆ – target forms

The 1994 test focused on investigating the transfer of the indirect passive using another nine dialogues. Table 3 shows the results.

"Nominal" in Table 3 means that some students nominalized the description of the incidents in order to solve the problem when they could not find an agentive subject. For example, in situation E, the interviewers were agents and asked many questions to "I." However, the Japanese cue sentence in indirect passive does not explicitly express the agent but emphasize that "I" got nervous in the interview. The students had to grasp an agent in the context of the dialogue. Instead, they nominalized the interview scene and made a sentence like " I got nervous about many questions in the interview." This is not, of course, a wrong expression, but is considered as one of the students' communication strategies to make up a sentence without an agent.

Figure 3



Although there are individual perceptual differences in the psychological distance from the incidents, the percentages of an active form with an agentive subject in Figure 3 reasonably show that the students' structural preference is affected by their perception of the psychological distance between "I" and the incidents as well as shown in Figure 2.

3. Conclusion

The analysis of the students' structural preference affected by the concept of the indirect passive showed that the passive markers "-reru" and "-rareru" were interpreted to express the speaker's feeling, and on the other hand, were considered a structure for describing incidents apart from the agent even though s/he was explicitly or implicitly mentioned. Thus, Japanese grammar is very clear in distinguishing between situations in which the speaker explains his own internal states and those in which he explains other's such states in others. Japanese has morphological devices to express the speaker's epistemological differences(Iwasaki, 1993) toward incidents. The passive suffix discussed here is one of them.

Further empirical studies will be designed to explore more fully the transfer of perspective, which is seen in the interlanguage affected by the concept of other morphological devices such as diectic verbs, "*iku*(=go)" and "*kuru*(=come)" and the verbs for giving "yaru," "ageru,"and "kureru"as auxiliaries to form compound verbs.

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